

IT'S ELEVEN O'CLOCK. DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILDREN ARE?

SUBURBAN NIGHTMARES. FOUR BIWEEKLY ISSUES.
COMING IN JULY FROM RENEGADE PRESS.

Appearances: (Deni)

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WURDER ROCK
CRUISE
AMIST-TREE TALE



"MURDER CRUISE"

A MIST-TREE TALE

BY MAX COLLINS, TERRY BEATTY AND GARY KATO

Day Two:

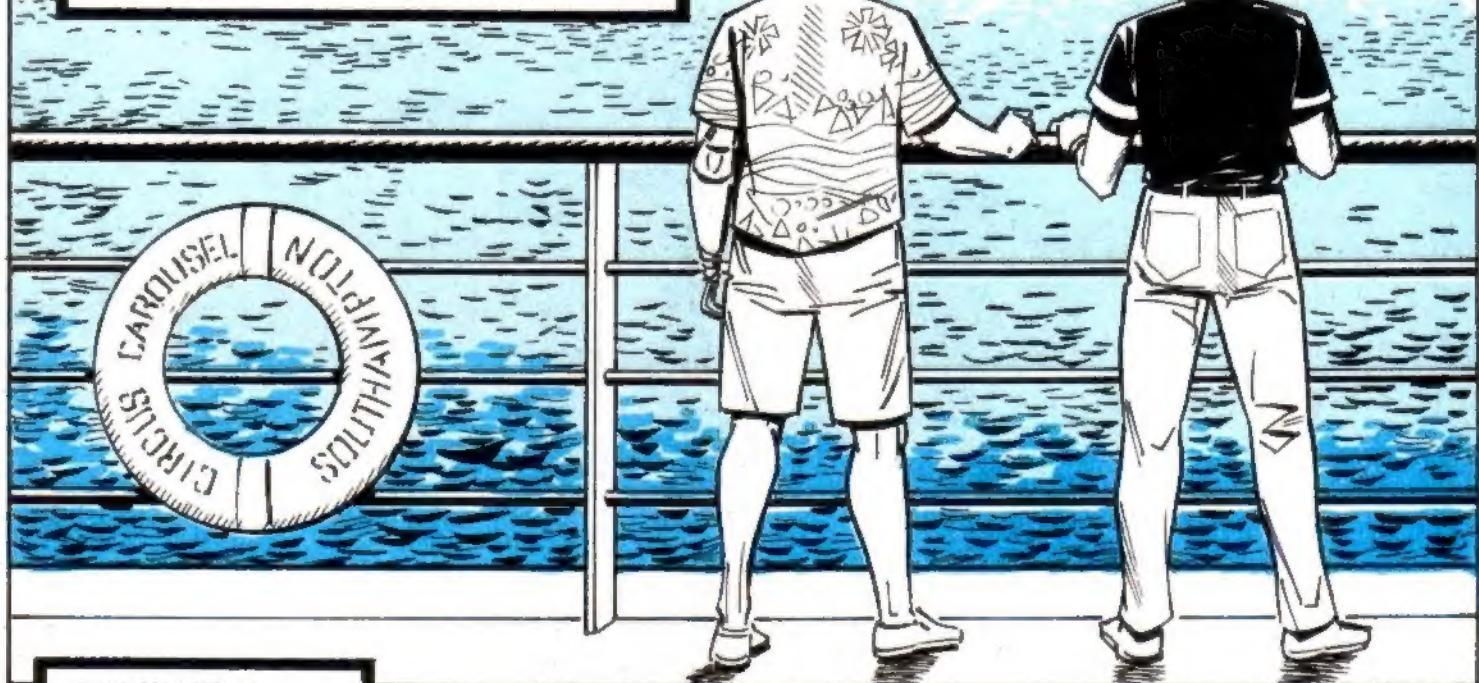
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SUNDAY.
TORTOLA.

ROGER FREEMONT IS MORE THAN JUST A FELLOW EMPLOYEE OF TREE INVESTIGATIONS, INC. HE'S A FRIEND. BUT HE'S ALSO MORE THAN JUST A FRIEND... WHERE THIS CRUISE WAS CONCERNED, HE'S...

A PAIN IN THE ASS.

THANK YOU.



MY NAME IS DAN GREEN.

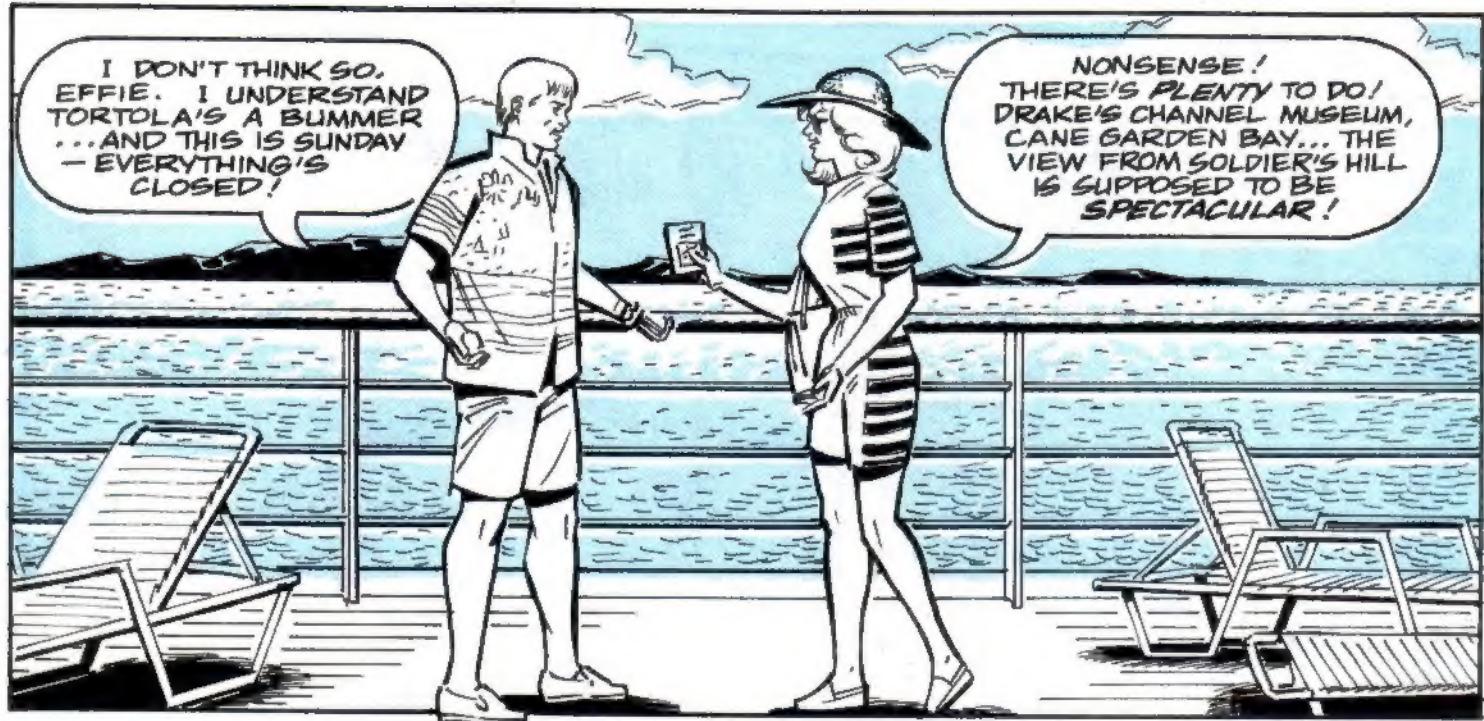
LOOK, ROGER - I KNOW ALL ABOUT BEING BITTER. I KNOW ABOUT PAIN... AND LOSS...

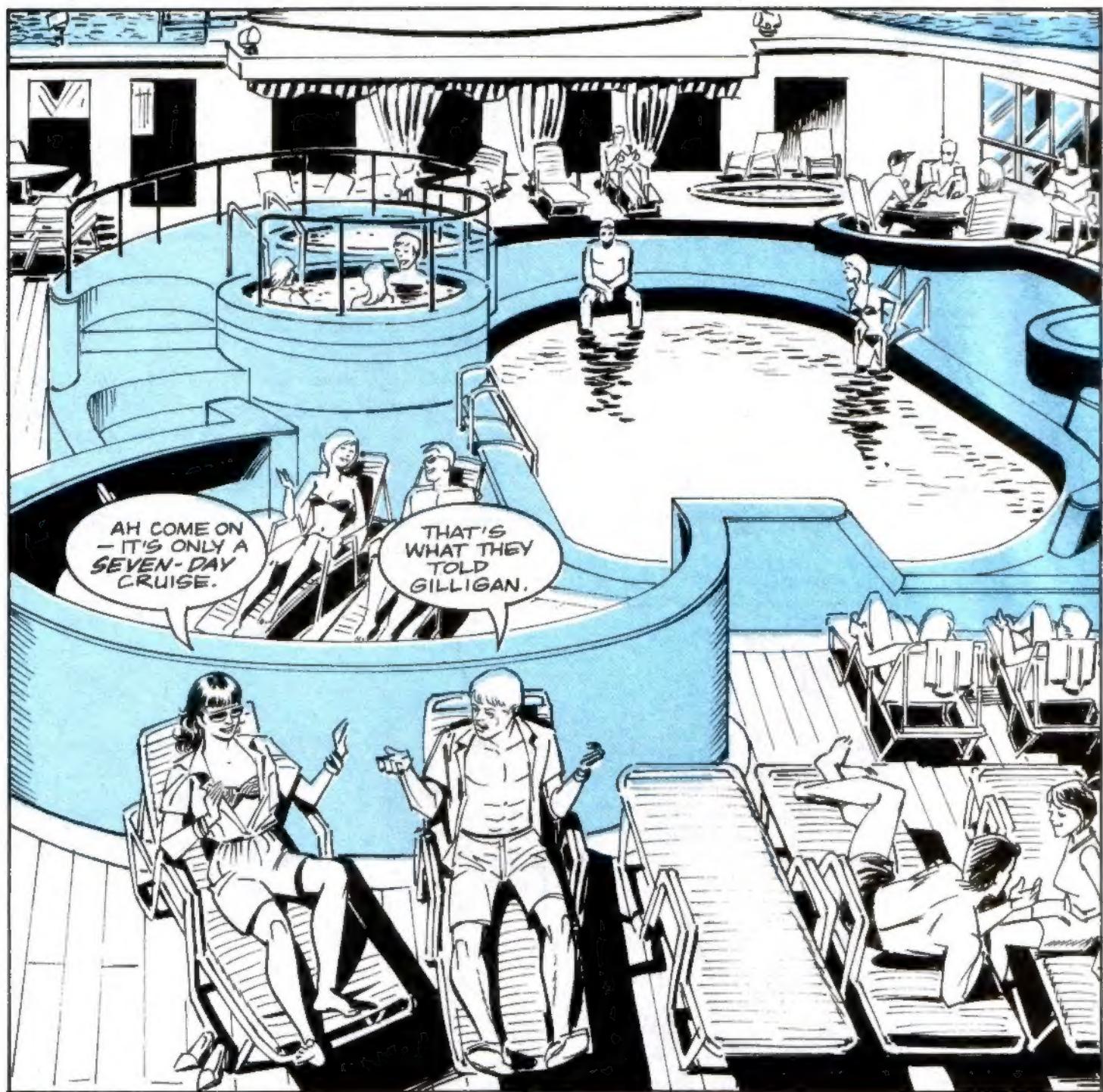
BUT SOONER OR LATER YOU GOTTA DEAL WITH IT -

THIS IS MY WAY OF DEALING WITH IT.



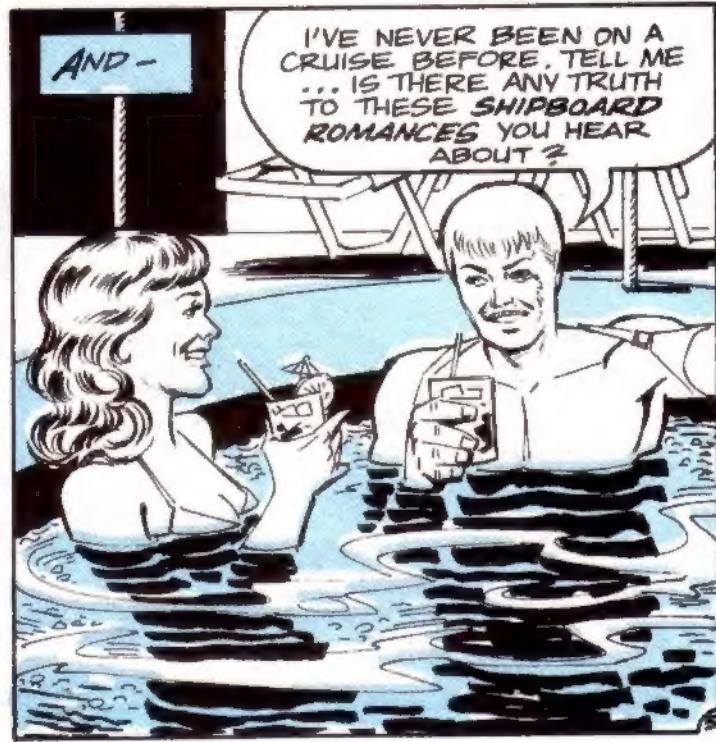
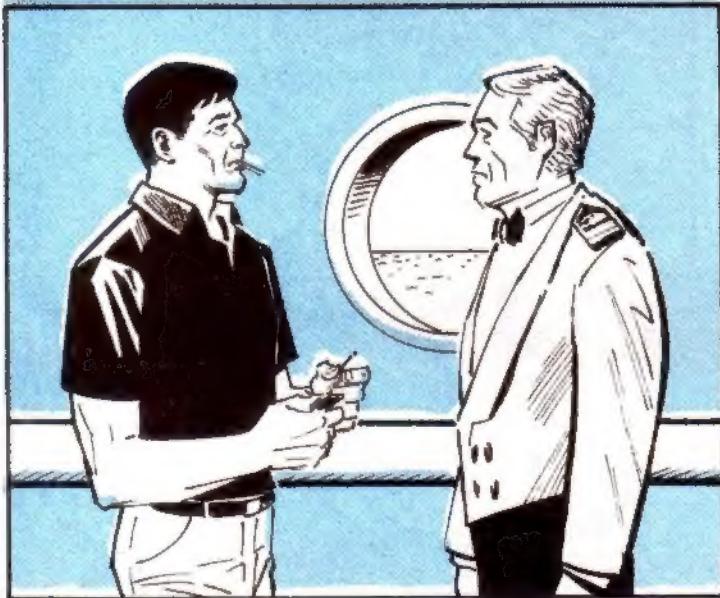






"YES," MS. TREE SAID. "I'VE NOTICED.
I THINK IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH
HIS FRIEND WILL JACKSON'S MURDER..."

"...BUT WHAT THAT COULD HAVE TO
DO WITH THIS CRUISE IS BEYOND ME."







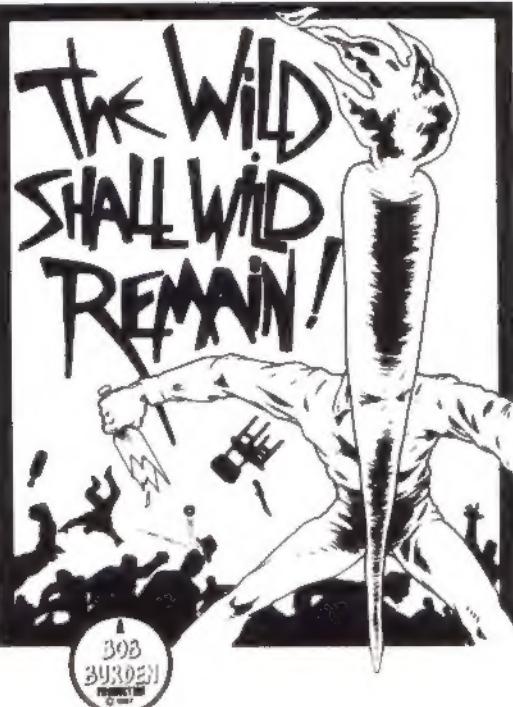
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MAX ALLAN COLLINS NOVELS (AND STORIES)

*CARIBBEAN BLUES - Paperjacks pb. Authors' advance donated to Literacy Volunteers; Max Collins, Warren Murphy, Gregory Macdonald, Robert Randisi, Mary Higgins Clark, Richard Meyers, and Molly Cochran wrote this round-robin style mystery taking place on a cruise - on a cruise. A wild, funny adventure. Set in the '30s, Collins chapters feature Nate Heller. \$3.95.

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TOMORROW I DIE - Collection of Mickey Spillane short stories and novelettes from 1950s. Mysterious Press hardcover. Edited and introduced by Max Allan Collins and dustjacket by Steranko. Published in 1983 at \$14.95. Includes the complete, great short novel, "Everybody's Watching Me." \$2.95.

BLACK LIZARD ANTHOLOGY OF CRIME FICTION - trade paperback. Features new Nate Heller short story, "Scrap," plus stories by Ed Gorman, Harlan Ellison, Bill Pronzini, etc. Recommended. \$8.95.

OTHER NEW BOOKS:

ADVENTURES OF SATAN HALL - Carroll John Daly. Mysterious Press trade paperback, four short novels from Detective Fiction Weekly of the 1930s. Hall was a police detective in the Dirty Harry mode, as relentless and cold-blooded as the criminals he fought. From the originator of the hardboiled detective story. \$8.95.

HERE IT IS! IN ANSWER TO YOUR MANY REQUESTS, WE BRING YOU A FULL-LENGTH FEATURE OF...

LUKE HENNESSY ...HOMICIDE



GOSH, HENNESSY. BEING A COP IS ONE THING. BUT SITTING HERE AND WATCHING A MAN BEING...

ELECTROCUTED? YEAH, I KNOW, TUCKER. IT'S NO FUN, NO FUN AT ALL.



YOU LOOK AROUND YOU, LUKE HENNESSY. YOU LOOK AT THE OTHER WITNESSES PRESENT FOR THE EXECUTION. YOU WONDER WHAT'S GOING ON IN THEIR MINDS. YOU WONDER WHAT THEY'D THINK IF THEY KNEW THE **TRUE** STORY OF THIS MAN WHO'S ABOUT TO DIE.



THEY BEGIN TO STRAP TONY COLIN TO THE CHAIR. AND YOUR MIND, LOOKING FOR ESCAPE FROM THE SORDID SCENE, BEGINS TO BUZZ AROUND. YOU BEGIN TO THINK BACK OVER THE YEARS...



...TO THE BEGINNING OF TONY COLIN'S ILL-FATED CAREER.

YOU'RE DOIN' PRETTY GOOD, TONY-BOY. I GOT BIG THINGS PLANNED FOR YOU.

THANKS, MR. TUSKO!



TONY WAS A HUSTLER, AND IN A FEW YEARS HAD WORKED HIMSELF UP FROM AN ORDINARY HOOD TO AL TUSKO'S PRIVATE BODYGUARD.

I CAN'T KEEP PAYING THIS KIND OF PROTECTION MONEY, MR. TUSKO. I CAN'T STAY IN BUSINESS...

YOU TAKE ONE MORE STEP TOWARD MR. TUSKO AND YOU'RE DEAD MISTER!



TONY REVELED IN HIS UNDERWORLD GLORY. HE WAS BECOMING A BIG SHOT IN HIS OWN RIGHT, AND HE ENJOVED EVERY MINUTE OF IT.



A FEW MORE VERSES PASSED, AS TONY COLIN KEPT ON WITH HIS JOB AS BODYGUARD TO AL TUSKO. BUT THE MOB WASN'T SATISFIED WITH THE WAY THINGS WERE GOING...



...SO ONE NIGHT...

"THAT'S IT TONY. TUSKO IS GETTIN' OLD, HE'S LOSIN' CONTROL OF THE MOB. WE NEED A CHANGE. A GUV WHO CAN TAKE OVER. WE FIGURE YOU'RE THE BOY! WHAT DO YOU SAY?

OK BY ME! YOU GUYS BACK ME AND WE'LL MAKE THE CHANGE.



THE MOB, WITH ITS NEW BOSS, DIDN'T WASTE ANY TIME IN ACTING. BEFORE THE NIGHT WAS OVER...



TONY WAS THE BIG SHOT NOW, AND HIS LUST FOR MONEY AND POWER GREW WITH A SEEMINGLY UNQUENCHABLE THIRST.



IN A MATTER OF MONTHS, TONY COLIN HAD MADE IT. HE WAS 'THE' BIG SHOT. BUT SOMEHOW SUCCESS DIDN'T BRING HIM THE HAPPINESS HE DESIRED.

YOU COMIN' TO THE BRAWL, TONIGHT TONY? THERE'S SOME NEW BASES...

NO THANKS, TOM. COUNT ME OUT.



I CAN'T FIGURE IT. I'M AT THE TOP OF THE HEAP. I HAVE EVERYTHING I WANT... AND YET, SOMETHING'S MISSING. THERE'S GOT TO BE AN ANSWER.. SOMEPLACE...

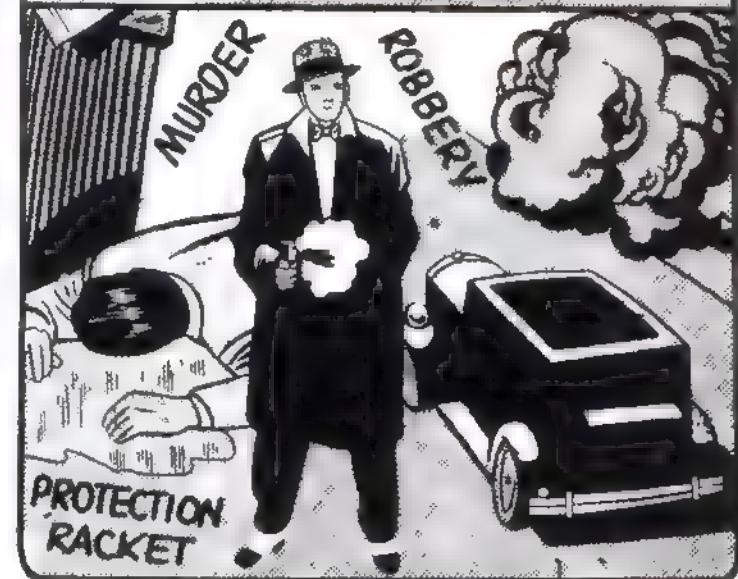


TONY WAS SOON TO FIND HIS ANSWER, IN THE FORM OF PRETTY MARTHA MITCHELL. THE MONTHS PASSED, AND THEN...

YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU, MARTHA. SAY YOU'LL MARRY ME, AND I'LL PULL OUT OF THE RACKETS FOR GOOD.

OH YES, TONY. YES. YES.

TONY WAS MARRIED AND HE TRIED TO KEEP HIS PROMISE, BUT HE WAS THE BIG SHOT, AND THERE WAS NO WAY OUT...AT LEAST, NOT ALIVE. HE HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO GO ALONG.



THE MOB CONTINUED TO FLOURISH WITH TONY AS ITS BOSS. SOON ALL NEW YORK WAS AT ITS MERCY. BUT TO TONY, ALL THAT MATTERED WAS HIS WIFE MARTHA AND...

HOW'S THE BOY?

FINE TONY! FINE. AND I WON'T HAVE HIM GROW UP LIKE HIS FATHER. EITHER YOU QUIT YOUR RACKETS AND START A NEW LIFE...OR...OR...I'LL LEAVE YOU.

BUT...I...I... ALRIGHT. GIVE ME SOME TIME TO FIGURE A WAY.



AGAIN TONY TRIED TO SEVER HIS TIES WITH THE UNDERWORLD, BUT IT DID HIM LITTLE GOOD. THEN ONE DAY...

Tony—
When you read this, Teddy and I will be on our way out of your life forever. Perhaps a change of name and a new address will give our son the chance he needs. Sorry it had to be like this.
Martha

TONY TRIED TO LOCATE HIS FAMILY, BUT TO NO AVAIL. BITTERNESS SEEMED TO TAKE HOLD OF HIM AFTER THAT, AS HE TURNED ALL HIS ENERGIES TO ACQUIRING MORE POWER.

...BUT TONY, YOU CAN'T TAKE OVER...

LISTEN, PUNK. I'M RUNNIN' THIS OUTFIT, SO WE'LL DO THINGS MY WAY! I SAY WE SPREAD OUT, AND TAKE OVER CHICAGO!



TONY COLIN'S MAD LUST FOR POWER SUFFERED ITS WORST DEFEAT AS HIS MOB WAS STOPPED COLD IN CHICAGO. THE TORO MOB, THEN IN COMMAND OF THE CHICAGO RACKETS, NEW OF TONY'S COMING... AND HAD PREPARED FOR IT!!



TONY IT, IT'S CRAZY TO STAY HERE. THEY'VE WIPEO US OUT. LET'S GET OUT WHILE WE STILL CAN.

YOU GUYS CAN RUN IF YOU WANT TO, BUT I'M GOIN' ALL THE WAY ON THIS DEAL. WITH OR WITHOUT YOU. NOW BEAT IT! GET OUT!



TONY WAS DETERMINED TO GET HIS REVENGE, ON THE ONES RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS DEFEAT. HE FOUND OUT THE WHEREABOUTS OF JOHNNY AND AL TORO AND WENT OUT GUNNING.

THIS THING'LL BE SETTLED ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, RIGHT NOW!



HIVA, JOHNNY-BON! HERE'S A LITTLE PRESENT FOR YOU.

HUH? WHA... COLIN!



JOHNNY TORO FELL DEAD, AND HIS BROTHER AL, SOON FOLLOWED HIM! BUT THE END OF AN ERA WAS AT HAND, AS THE POLICE CLOSED IN ON TONY COLIN. THAT WAS YOUR FIRST CONTACT WITH COLIN, HENNESSY, FOR YOU WERE THE ARRESTING OFFICER ON THE SCENE.



COLIN GOT HOLD OF SOME FAST TALKING LAWYERS. AND WAS ABLE TO GET OFF WITH A JAIL SENTENCE.



THE TIME PASSED SLOWLY FOR COLIN, FOR HE HAD TWENTY YEARS IN WHICH TO REGRET HIS PAST LIFE... AND MISTAKES.



MAYBE.. MAYBE IF I CAN STRAIGHTEN MYSELF OUT, KEEP MY NOSE CLEAN, AN' STAY AWAY FROM THE MOB, MAYBE THEN I CAN FIND MARTHA AND TED.. AND START CLEAN AGAIN!



AFTER THAT, COLIN BECAME A MODEL PRISONER. AND SERVED HIS SENTENCE WITHOUT A WHIMPER. THEN, ONE DAY...



TONY COLIN PUT HIS PLAN INTO ACTION, AND KEPT AWAY FROM HIS UNDERWORLD FRIENDS. HE GOT A JOB IN ORDER TO BUILD UP ENOUGH OF A BANK-ROLL TO SEARCH FOR HIS FAMILY.



BUT THE UNDERWORLD WAS A BIG PLACE. TOO BIG FOR ANYONE TO HIDE FROM IT.

HI-YA TONY-BOY, HOW'S THINGS? IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.

JERRY CARTER AND FRED TALON!



YEP, IT'S BEEN A REAL LONG TIME. BUT THAT'S OVER NOW. LOOK, FRED EVEN SAVED YOUR ROD FOR YOU. SHE'S LOADED AND SET TO GO. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT PLANNED?

YOU GOT ME ALL WRONG, BOYS. I'M PLAVIN' IT STRAIGHT FROM HERE ON IN. SORRY GUYS, BUT THAT'S HOW IT IS.

ARE YOU KIDDIN'? JUST LIKE THAT, YOU WANT OUT! BIG DEAL, HA! LOOK, TONY, WE NEED YOU. YOU'RE THE ONLY GUY THAT CAN REORGANIZE THE OLD MOB. WE'VE WAITED A LONG TIME FOR THIS, AND YOU'RE NOT MESSIN' THINGS UP **NOW!** YOU'RE IN! WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT!



TONY COLIN'S HEAD BEGAN TO POUND. ONCE MORE, HE WAS FACED WITH THE SAME PROBLEM. BUT THIS TIME HE WOULDN'T KNUCKLE UNDER. NO, NOT THIS TIME.



TONY'S FIRST IMPULSE WAS TO RUN. BUT HE KNEW IT WAS OF LITTLE USE. HE WAS FINISHED, AND HE KNEW IT. HE REACHED FOR THE PHONE.

LUKE HENNESSY. THE GUY THAT NABBED ME, BEFORE. HE SEEMED LIKE A RIGHT GUY. MAYBE HE'LL COME DOWN AND... MAYBE...



I WANT TO SEE MY KID ONCE MORE, HENNESSY. THIS IS THE END OF THE LINE FOR ME, THAT'S FOR SURE. I THOUGHT... MAYBE YOU'D... WELL... KIND OF FIND HIM FOR ME!

I'LL DO WHAT I CAN, COLIN. BUT IS IT FAIR TO HIM, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS?



DON'T TELL HIM WHO I AM, HENNESSY... JUST LET ME SEE HIM. I'LL KNOW HIM, AND THAT... THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS. NOW!



TONY COLIN WAS PUT ON TRIAL AND WAS SENTENCED TO DIE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR

YOU WATCH AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO PUT THE HOOD ON HIS FACE. AND YOU NOTICE COLIN GLANCE IN YOUR DIRECTION... AND SMILE.



THEN THE SWITCH IS PULLED. AND A CRIMINAL DIES!



YOU LEAVE THE DEATH HOUSE WITH THE OTHER WITNESSES... AND YOU ARE GLAD TO GET OUT. THE RAIN POURS DOWN. BUT YOU DON'T MIND IT. IT FEELS COOL... CLEAN.



YOU GUYS GO AHEAD AND GET THE BUS. I... I WANT TO WALK AWHILE. MAYBE... I... I... CAN SHAKE THIS NIGHT OUT OF MY MIND.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. OKAY, I'LL SEE YOU IN THE MORNING, TUCKER.



THE END

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WALLY WOOD MAD artwork/MARILYN MONROE Parody Pages

From PANIC "How to Marry a Millionaire" parody, issue #5, the following: Page 1, splash, no Marilyn, but great Wood comedy and hand-lettering (including signature) \$200; Pages 3, 5, and 6, superb Marilyn shots (also Grable and Bacall) - \$350 each.

From MAD "Smilin' Melvin" parody, final page, great final gag, great girls, fantastic example of Wood's comic artistry, \$400.

MS. TREE SPLASH PAGES - \$50 each: MURDER AT MOHAWK, Part Two; DEATH, DANGER, DIAMONDS Ch. 1; DEADLINE, Ch. 8; MUERTA MEANS DEATH, Ch. 4; PRISONER CELL BLOCK HELL, Ch. 3; RUNAWAY II, Ch. 3.

P.I.s Pages by Beatty/Staton, \$50 each: pg. 18 and 23, issue 1.

DAREDEVIL cover by FRANK MILLER - Issue 180 - \$450.

BILL EVERETT "Sub-Mariner" Page, TALES to ASTONISH, pg. 9, \$200.

FELIX THE CAT Golden Age comic bk page by Otto Mesmer, \$100.

MODESTY BLAISE by O'Donnell & Romero - of the twenty-five of these I purchased from a British dealer, I have five left:
#2791 - Modesty and Willie in two panels with close-ups; villain tortures Rufus in Panel Three. A first-rate example. \$100.
#2411 - Modesty, Tarrant, Willie in one big panel; commando raid in other - \$90. #2422 - Modesty and Willie, medieval garb, \$90.
#2418 - Modesty, Willie - \$90. #2473 - Willie, Tarrant - \$75.

GARTH - F.272. Nice Bellamy strip; Garth and nude beauty - \$100.

CAROL O'DAY - #590. Ultra-rare example of famous British mystery strip; a beautiful, moody piece - Carol well-shown. \$100.

CAPTAIN EASY - 3-27-1945. Sweet example of Leslie Turner's early work on classic strip; Easy throughout, lovely '40s girl - \$100.

DICK TRACY - Fletcher/Collins. Two Sunday pages - my last two: 11/16/'80, Tracy well-shown in one panel; and 6-22-'80, Tracy and Sam in one panel, Lizz well-shown, Sue Reel & Art Dekko in Rogues' Gallery. Big half-page format originals. \$100 each.

PRETTY GIRL PANEL CARTOONS FROM '40s/early '50s: examples by Jefferson Machamer, Bill Wenzel, Priscilla, Reamer Keller, \$25 each, or 5 for \$100. A steal. Specify artist(s). Also: one Bill Ward on craftint board, excellent non-raunchy example, \$35.

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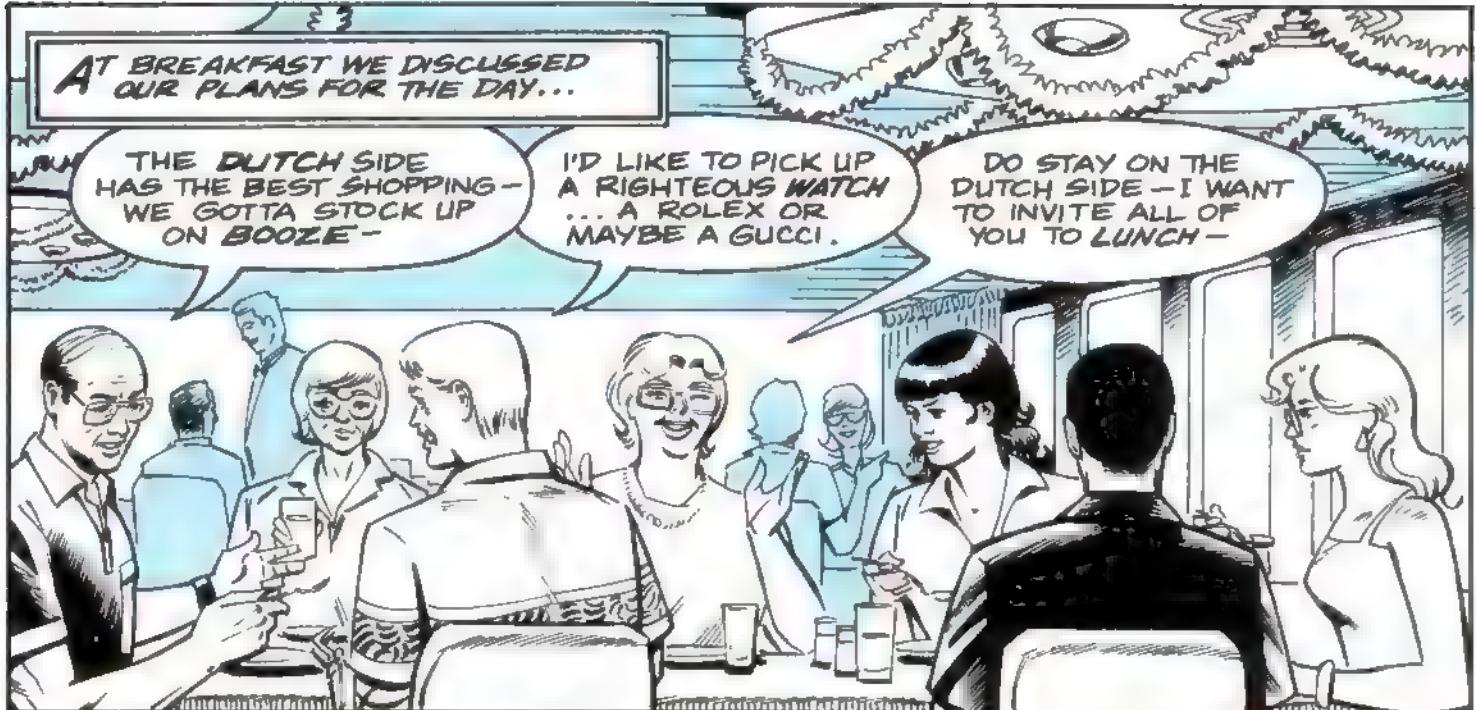
DEATH GOES DUTCH

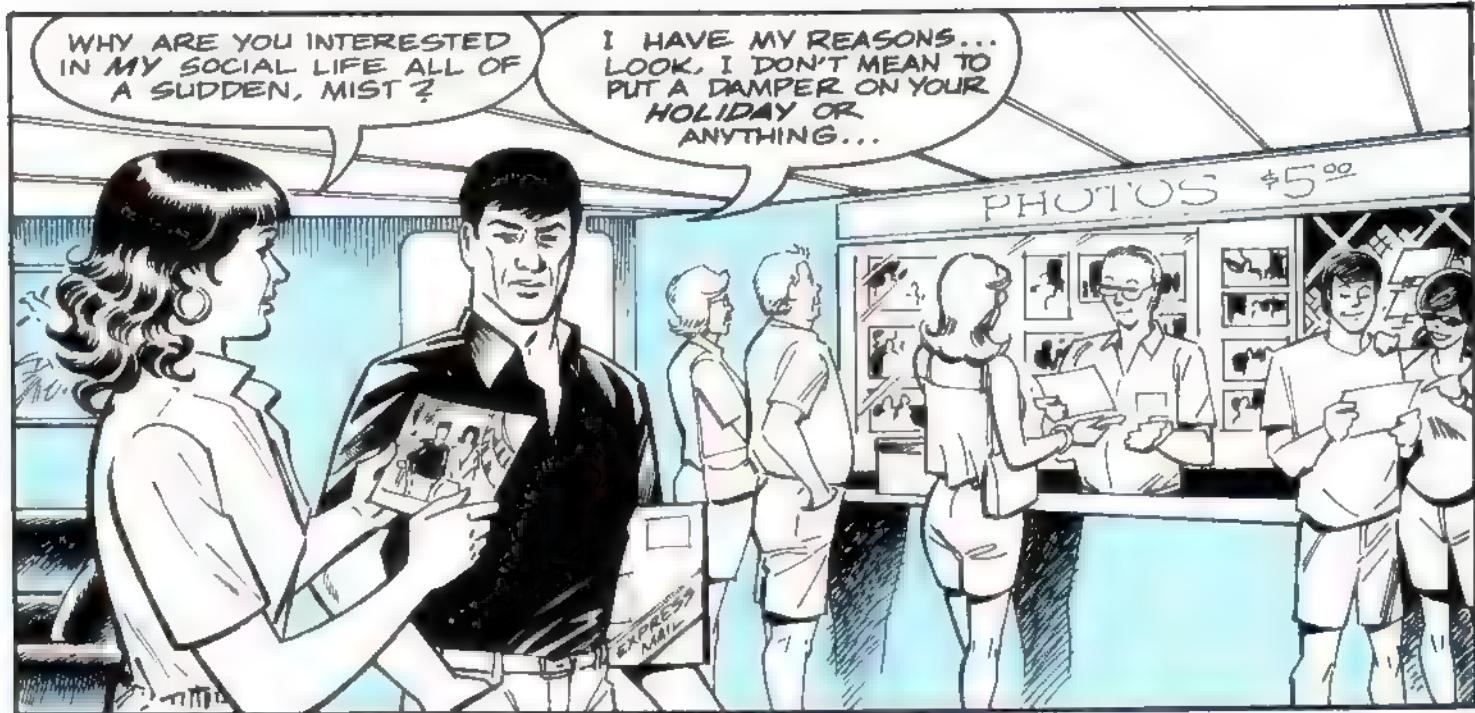
MONDAY.
ST. MAARTEN.

AND NOW, FINALLY, WE HAD A
LOVELY DAY, ON AN ISLAND
NOTED BOTH FOR ITS
STUNNINGLY WHITE BEACHES
AND ITS DUTY-FREE SHOPPING...

THE FRENCH CALLED IT SAINT-MARTIN,
AND THE DUTCH CALLED IT SINT-MAARTEN;
EITHER WAY IT WAS PART OF BOTH THE
FRENCH WEST INDIES AND THE
NETHERLAND ANTILLES.

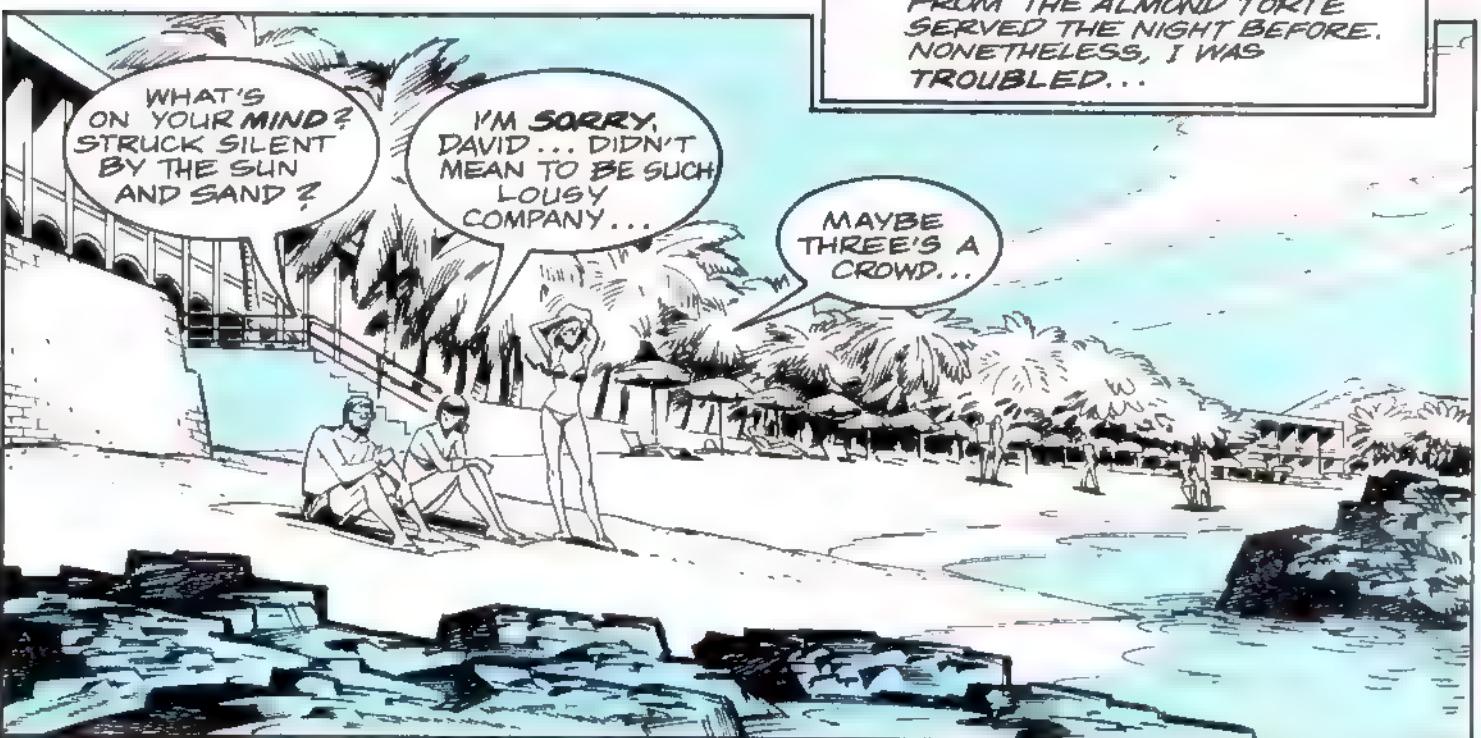






"BUT REMEMBER THAT DRINK YOU
SPILLED, WHEN THE SHIP LURCHED IN
THE STORM LAST NIGHT?"







WHILE I WAS ROMANCING DAVID CARRUTHERS IN MY OWN FASHION BACK AT LITTLE BAY BEACH, ROGER AND DAN WERE, LIKE ALL GOOD AMERICANS ON VACATION, CONSPICUOUSLY CONSUMING —

IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR LUNCH, ISN'T IT?

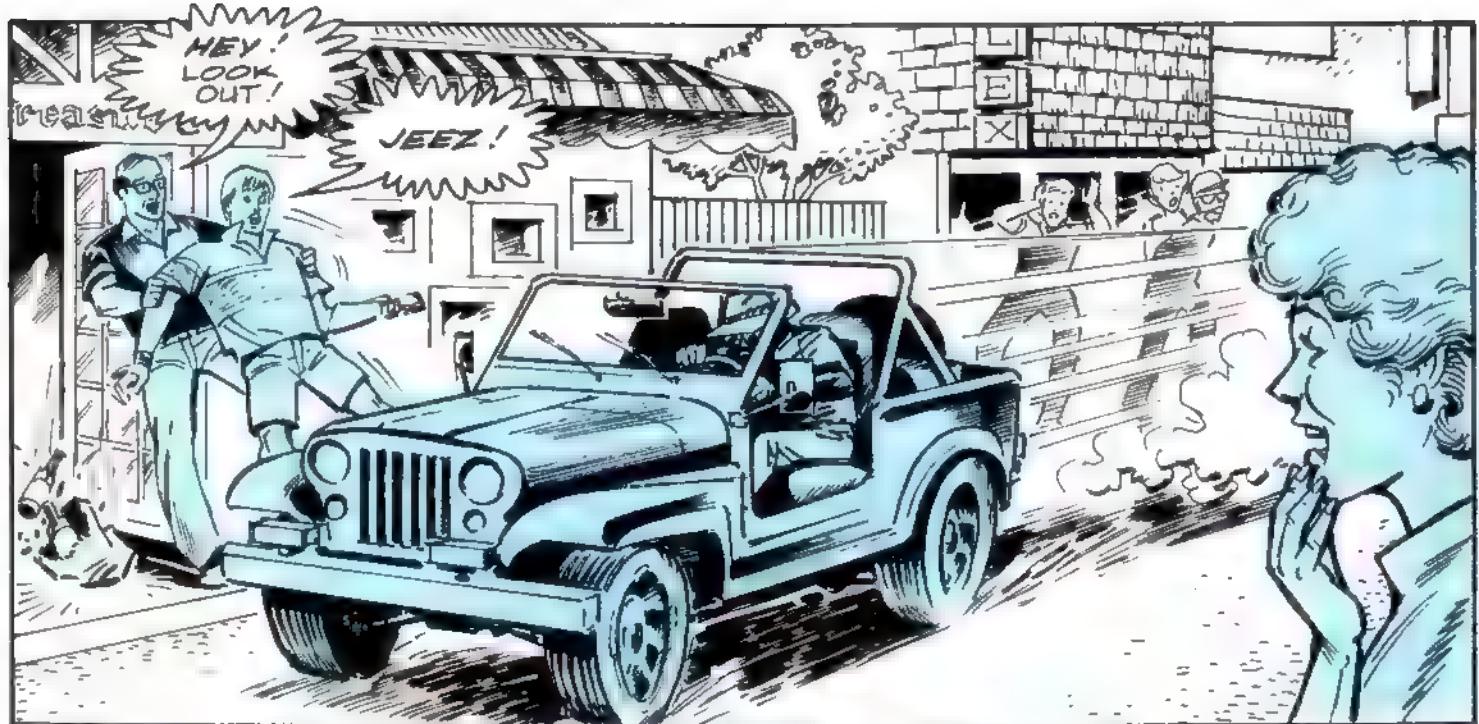
ACCORDING TO MY NEW AUDEMARS PIGUET, IT IS!

LET'S HEAD TO THAT OUTDOOR CAFE — WE'LL HAVE LUNCH ON THAT OLD SCHOOLTEACHER BROAD.

ROGER, YOUR AFFECTION FOR YOUR FELLOW PASSENGERS IS TOUCHING.

YOUR AFFECTION FOR ONE "FELLOW" PASSENGER MUST BE WANING, IF YOU'RE HERE WITH ME.

JULIE? SHE'LL GET OVER IT.



TO BE CONTINUED —

"It's my idea of ideal reading. I loved it!"
Mickey Spillane



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Kill off Ms. Tree. I'm all for it! Kill her off. What a lettercol that would generate, huh?

I suggest that the creators both contemplate and start working on various aspects of this event while their creative inspiration for the character is at its zenith. That way, when they feel that their enthusiasm for doing MS. TREE has waned sufficiently that they are ready to lay her down to rest permanently, (I hope not until after a hundred issues, or, better yet, a hundred stories), they'll have a dynamite finish all ready to go.

Let's face it: Ms. Tree has to die. That's where her life is headed.

How will she die? On the field of battle, like Achilles? That others might have life, like Jesus? Wasted by cancer, like Captain Marvel? Murdered? A suicide? Executed by the state in the name of the people? (Wouldn't writer Max Collins have a field day kicking that ball around?) Of course, they could always pull a Jonah Hex.

Kill off Ms. Tree? I like it: it works! If Erle Stanley Gardner had killed Perry Mason, I'd still have been reading the D.A. stories, the Donald Lam/Bertha Cool stories and such.

"Like Father" was so obviously written with two chapters per issue in mind, (e.g. showing us the killer in chapter one, and introducing him as policeman Danny Strout in the last panel of chapter two, as a hook), that chopping it up makes for very uneven monthly reading. I do look forward to reading individual chapters specifically written as solo monthly installments. Makeshift adjustments detract from the book's polish.

All the flap over Johnny Dynamite seems to be of a highly obstinate nature. "Drop the reprint or I'll drop the book," is an ultimatum which leaves no room for negotiation.

When I was a pre-teen during the Charlton Comics renaissance of the mid-sixties I turned on to a costumed martial arts adventurer comic, THUNDERBOLT, drawn by a talented artist whose signature was the mysterious three capital letters PAM. Was it a woman named Pamela? Were these initials? The art was exquisite, and I hungered to see more, but it soon changed hands, the book folded, and except for a horror story or two I saw no more of this fine work.

Over twenty years later you have re-introduced me to the work of Pete Morisi, for which I thank you.

The later Johnny Dynamite stories, (which you reprinted first), may have been poorly written, or butchered by the Comics Code Authority's censorship; but the Morisi art, taken from black and white proofs, was quite satisfying to behold.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the reproduction quality of the Morisi art from the earlier COMIC MEDIA stories. Matt Masterson's dropping of the color out of these stories to the point where black and white reproduction of them was possible is, to date, severely flawed.

The studio and production techniques and procedures which Masterson has so far employed fall far short of producing a visually satisfying result. This is a technical problem which is by no means insolvable, (the trick is doing it under budget), and if it is not morally incumbent, it is certainly strategic

logically incumbent upon you all—publisher Deni Loubert, owners Max Collins and Terry Beatty, and production helper Matt Masterson—as entrepreneurial collaborators, to upgrade the production quality of the product. I urge the owners and publisher to either charge poor beleaguered Matt Masterson with overcoming this problem, or find a studio technician who can.

Meanwhile, I am enjoying the stores and look forward to the even better, Morisi-written, ones that you promise; I am enjoying the Johnny Dynamite character, (thanks for presenting this classic work); and I am trying to enjoy the fifth encrusted pearl which is your presentation of Pete Morisi's artwork.

The MS. TREE team has proven itself in the past at providing quality product on a regular basis, and creatively has just begun to hit its stride with the character; so I am willing to forgive the recent unevenness and 'glitches' for as long as it takes to get back on track. Just so long as it's remedied in a timely fashion.

David Malcom Porta, Sacramento, CA

Kill off Ms. Tree? What an outrageous idea! It'll never happen! Not until issue #50, anyway. Your comments about Pete Morisi are much appreciated. My friend Matt Masterson is no longer handling the black-and-white conversion (think of it as de-colorization) of "Johnny Dynamite." We have a better process now, but it's not flawless; Terry puts hours into touching up the reprint material, incidentally.

I'm not sure I understand your complaint about Chapter One of "Like Father," as it seems to speak to rather typical (and necessary) storytelling strategy as far as setting up characters and doing a cliffhanger are concerned. But I do feel it's taken me a while to get the feel of the shorter chapters. We've had many good comments on "Like Father," but I felt its potential was not fully realized, due to the fact that I was "going to school" re: the new format, during its creation. "Coming of Rage" did not have the potential of "Like Father," but the former was a better story nonetheless, because I had learned something about how to deal with this format. No big deal—my career has been one of on-the-job training since day one.

Dear Max,

Congratulations! What for you might ask? No, it is not because this year you crossed over to the big two with first BATMAN and then the WILD DOG mini-series. No, it is not because this year the name Max Allan Collins was seen among the paperback section at a super-market (wow, just like Harold Robbins and Sidney Sheldon). Or the number of your novels that were released in paperback in the last 12 months. No, the real reason is that the letter to MS. TREE #42 will be the last letter I type for the year 1987. Sheesh! What an honor!

Now as for the story itself, "Sins of the Mother," is the best one yet since the switch to the new format. Perhaps it is because of the contrast with last issue's ho-(but necessary for plot development)-hummer. But this chapter was a lot of fun. Hey, T.E. Pouncey, are you still out there? Even you got to

admit that the last three pages were worth the two bucks the issue cost. It was pure delight. Hats off to Terry for the wordless panel on page 11. It was the perfect reaction for thugs hearing that they kidnapped the daughter of Chicago's organized crime leader.

With regard to the promotion of *MS. TREE*, I suggest that you try to include subscription information in the back of the *Paperjacks* collections. The reason why you may ask is that if there is only a reference to the comic book and a suggestion that the reader visit his/her local comic shop, the new reader may give up upon finding that the local store either does not stock *MS. TREE* (the stupid fool) or sold out of the few issues the owner ordered (also the fool). Subscription information is one way of making sure that a new fan will be able to read and buy future issues.

By the way, the more I think of my idea of showcasing your prose talents in these pages, the more I like it. At this point, I have read everything (I hope) of yours that is in paperback. From *Nate Heller* to *Nolan*. From *Mallory* to *Quarry*. At the very worst, your fiction has been a good read, a pleasant amusement. At the very best, the *Heller* trilogy and the *Ness* novel, again—awesome. So, I for one, wouldn't mind seeing some in these pages especially if sprinkled with illos from Terry or Kato.

This brings me to the issue of plugs. You are not doing enough of them. I do not know if you feel a little bit uncomfortable with them. But you should do more plugs for your novels. I kept seeing them first appear in the bookstore before you mentioned them in *SWAK*, if at all, that they were out. The *Weinburg* ad is not enough. Tell us what material is coming out, and if you know, when. Especially when your fiction is not in one of your novels, like the *BLACK LIZARD ANTHOLOGY*. Trust me, I am pretty sure that your readers want to know.

I also want to thank you for referring me to Lawrence Block's *Scudder* series. I have read them all and am deeply impressed. My personal favorite is *EIGHT MILLION WAYS TO DIE*, though I wouldn't recommend the movie. They changed the setting from New York City with its grittiness to Sunny L.A. And that was the least offensive change from the novel. I can also recommend his *Tanner* series. They are pretty amusing novels he wrote in the late 60s featuring a man who lost his ability to sleep.

Right now, I have started reading the *Travis McGee* novels by John D. MacDonald. I am reading them in order and am about to begin *DARKER THAN AMBER*, the seventh in the series. My opinion? Quite simply, his name is worthy of being in the same sentence as Hammett and Chandler. New readers should start with *THE DEEP BLUE GOOD-BYE* and read onward. My New year's resolution is to read them all.

Another writer I can recommend is George C. Chesbro. His P.I. is Mongo, a dwarf who's a former circus star, turned professor of criminology. The cases he handles have a mixture of horror and fantasy elements, so take this as a warning for those who want there P.I.'s hard-boiled pure.

Finally, Terry could you stop using the color black on the cover. It would not be important if I was the type who don't bother reading the comics he buys and just bags them. But I do read *MS. TREE* and finger-prints on the cover are annoying to look at and distract from your artwork.

J. Alexander Hall, Sherman Oaks, CA

Ah yes, the old "black covers and fingerprints" controversy, which we first dealt with back on #11. I would ask for Terry's opinion, but he'd just throw something at me or snort or something. Anyway, you're the first person to complain that

*I don't plug my books enough in this column; there are those, in fact, who think *SWAK* should be labeled "advertisement." For the record, the current book is *NEON MIRAGE*, the fourth *Nate Heller*, from St. Martin's Press in hardcover.*

*To respond to other points of yours: we will indeed give subscription info in the *Paperjacks* collections, although we have to stop short of an actual ad page; Lawrence Block and John D. MacDonald are two of my favorites—I know the former quite well, and had the honor of meeting the latter once; and I've never read Chesbro's Mongo books, being put off by the gimmicks surrounding the main character, but I do know that the series is extremely popular among mystery fans. And thank you for the kind words about my novels. Did I mention I have a new one out, called *NEON MIRAGE*...?*

Max, Terry, Gary, Barb, et all,

MS. TREE seems to be getting back to more-or-less monthly frequency, for which deep thanks from here. The story progresses apace, no problem there. *Johnny Dynamite* is a suitable companion piece, no problem there, either. And what reader in this here USA would complain about a five-page letter column? (Aside from the guy/gal who has to prepare the typescript for the printer.) Well, as long as I'm here, there are a few matters I haven't addressed in earlier letters, so here goes:

When I first saw *MS. TREE* on the rack, I found myself put off by the duotone coloring, thanks to my regular exposure to the only other publications that employ it: the 'religious' tracts published by Jack Chick, particularly the anti-Catholic ones. I make no pretense of being devout in the faith of my upbringing, but the flagrant sectarian bigotry of the Chick tracts has always chilled me, and the fact that some well-meaning people actually buy this bilge at face value frightens me. Of course, I wouldn't go so far as to say that any of your readers who react negatively to duotone are making the same visceral connection, but you have to admit it makes for an interesting theory (bullshit perhaps, but mine own).

Segueing into the always bemusing subject of censorship, I don't have any more answers than the last time I wrote, but I do have a new question: Is there a threat or isn't there? What started as a debate over standards and limits has degenerated in record time into an industrial-strength slanging match between old rivals on totally unrelated subjects. The question of how far comics (or any medium) can and should go is too important to be used as cannon fodder for personal feuds. Max's comments in *CBG* about the social contract take on true importance in the face of this infantilism, much of it from people who should know better.

(Sidetrack: since Gary Groth is so hot to add work-for-hire vs. creator ownership to this issue, despite its being completely unrelated, I'd like to hear Max Collins, who works both sides of this street and is therefore in a better position to speak to it. If you already have, please tell me where.)

God, that was heavy. Gotta lighten up fast, so —

I bought the new *DICK TRACY* book from Citadel, and it is an unalloyed delight. EVERYTHING you could ever want to know about our favorite cop is in this book.

EXCEPT —

In 1967, NBC and 20th Century-Fox made a *DICK TRACY* pilot in the wake of the *Batman* craze. When the craze died out, this pilot vanished from the den of mortal man, and all I can remember about it is as follows:

1) It was produced by William Dozier, who was running

Batman at the time.

2) A full cast of regulars was announced, but I can only call to mind one member: Tracy was to be played by Ray MacDonnell, a soap-opera stalwart best-known these days as Dr. Joe Martin on All My Children. (I was going to include a picture of MacDonnell with this letter, but couldn't find a suitable one). I once saw a Dick Tracy toy of some sort in a store about this time, and the face was MacDonnell's.

3) In a recent book about Hollywood makeup artists called **MAKING A MONSTER** one chapter is devoted to John Chambers of *Planet Of the Apes* fame. One photo shows Chambers applying an elaborate Pruneface makeup to an unidentified actor. This at least indicates that the pilot did get filmed.

To the best of my knowledge, this Tracy pilot was never aired, anywhere, anytime. It may not even exist anymore. But even if it is the absolutely worst thing ever committed to celluloid, I'd still like to see it just once—if only to find out who the poor SOB in the Pruneface mask was. If you or anyone can add anything to what I've got here, it will be appreciated.

You must admit that what this letter lacks in relevance, it made up for in bewilderment. My next one may be even better. Best regards.

Michael Doran, Hometown, IL

*I've read some of the Jack Chick comics and always got a perverse charge out of them, though they are extremely disturbing when (as you say) you realize some readers are buying that bilge at face value. The censorship problem is very real (MS. TREE was one of the comics busted at Friendly Frank's, although ultimately not one named in the judgement against same) and Terry and I are dealing with the subject, in a satiric but sincere manner, in our first **WILD DOG** story in ACTION WEEKLY, "Moral Stand," a nine-parter. Where work-for-hire is concerned, I feel anything is fair if the parties who sign the contracts have their eyes open and lawyers present; I do plan to be very careful about which properties I might pitch at a major like DC or Marvel, as giving up ownership is a big, perilous step.*

That DICK TRACY pilot was once aired, as a summer fill-in I believe; I've seen it—it turns up at comics cons now and then in video shows. It's not very good, though the characters do look like those in the strip, particularly MacDonnell—lots of make-up and garish costuming. It was less campy than the BATMAN, but more campy than GREEN HORNET. The villain, as I recall, was not Pruneface, but some original-to-the-show character portrayed by frequent BATMAN villain Victor Buono.

Dear Max and Terry,

Well, I'm getting the MS. TREE habit. Heck, you probably got the most interesting female character in comic books, so here comes my regular patronage.

Re: Bud Plant's comments re: CEREBUS. First of all, I have absolutely no interest in how wonderful or how terrible a comic book writer/artist's personality may be. As with any other artist, I look at the creative work above all. Secondly, it's good to read you two getting another thumbs-up, but Mr. Plant's standards seem to quantitative ("as little new art as humanly possible") as opposed to qualitative. How much is in a comic book is not important. How good is it? That is the important question. I know my comics—reading would be a poorer experience with our the earth pig born and my favorite lady P.I.

You have the most interesting lettercol in comic books,

by the way.

Kevin Miller, Elmhurst, IL

The CEREBUS letter column ain't chopped liver, either.

Dear Max and Terry

The page count debate goes on, threatening to eclipse even the ratings debate! Thousands of letters arriving in Muscatine every day, causing an immediate book in local post office wage slips. Yet despite all this, Max and Terry manage to get out another chapter of the continuing adventures of Ms. Tree, P.I. with a gun. Will the saga never end!

Seriously, guys, I'm happy to see the letter column coming our in favour of the new MS. TREE. We'd all like more of our favorite heroine than less, but most of us appreciate the realities of the comic marketplace. Meanwhile, your suggestion about non-Ms. Tree fiction being serialized strikes me as a good one—or maybe even a new Ms. Tree bit of prose fiction, like in the "Files" books? This assumes you have the time, of course, as I'm assuming that the problem with volume of Ms. Tree pages is Terry's, time-wise, and not yours. I do realize you have a newspaper strip and novels to keep yourself occupied!

Talking of which, whilst your books are still unavailable over here, an American friend (hi Tom!) was sent me over a few of them, and I've just read MILLION DOLLAR WOUND which I found to be just as good as MS. TREE. Seriously, if you can get Terry to do the odd illustration, I don't think anyone would complain.

I know it's unfashionable to talk about actual story nowadays, but I'm very much enjoying "Coming of Rage." I think you were right with your admission that it took a while to come to terms with the new format, but now you're back in full swing. The problem with the shorter stories, of course, is giving all the members of the excellent cast enough time in the spotlight, but Rafe made his welcome return here, whilst Mike Jr. is deservedly taking centre stage. He's grown up a bit since his first appearance, hasn't he, discovering girls! (Ah, it takes you back!)

Back into the letter column, then, I guess I'll have to apologize to Chris Romano, especially as we've started a correspondence! Sorry, Chris, but I called it the way I saw it! At least you're still reading the book. I'd echo Paul Linhardt's call for more of Michael's tender side. As far as her harder face goes, though, I'd suggest that this is because she's somewhat older than she used to be when she first appeared, five years or so ago.

One thing I am missing in the stories, Max, is the social issues. I know that it's not a "social issues" comic, just that this was the sort of thing Michael got herself into, but it makes for such good debates, as well as such good reading. Maybe capital punishment and the right wing moral majority types would be a good couple of topics for discussion?

Malcolm Bourne
London, England

Your comments to and about Chris may fall on deaf ears, Malcolm. Last we heard from Chris (just before the end of the year), he had quit buying the book over the format change. You're right that I haven't done a "social issue" story since "Runaway II"; no special reason—nothing nasty in the news has caught my fancy. Maybe I'll do a televangelist tale.

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Al Davison

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will

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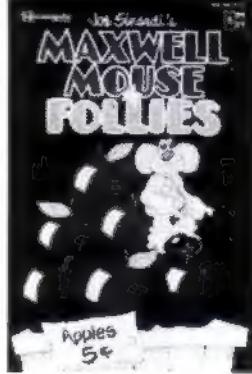
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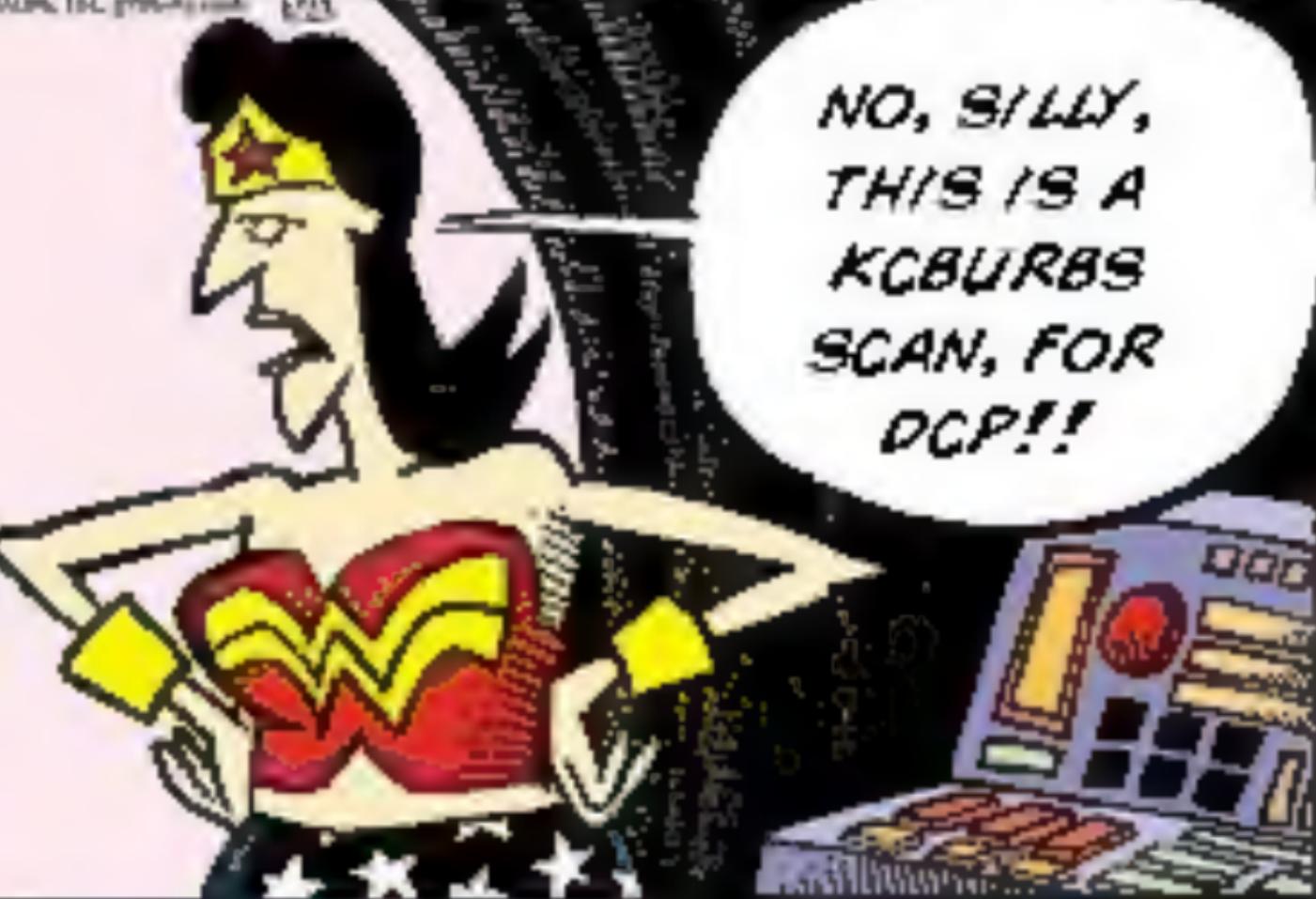


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YOU SCAN
THIS
COMIC?



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KCBURBS
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